

# Preface

*Teaching Children to Read in Diverse Communities: A Practical Guide to Reading Success*, Second Edition, continues to cover the essential research-based balanced reading strategies for the elementary and middle grades and current topics in the teaching of reading in a succinct and clear framework. School systems across the country are continuing their focus on differentiated instruction and flexible grouping to implement a balanced literacy/reading approach with increased emphasis on the instructional levels of students. As in the first edition, this practical and concise coverage continues to be presented along with attention to the realities of increased student diversity and the growing number of children living under the poverty line in our classrooms today.

The federal government's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), popularly known as the Nation's Report Card, has documented for many years the lower reading achievement of students of diverse backgrounds in the United States. Children who are unable to read sufficiently are at a high risk for dropping out of school. Children who do learn to read well are able to break the cycle of poverty and become productive individuals. The primary goals of this book are to help teachers teach children to read in our nation's schools and to develop in teachers a positive mind-set or set of dispositions to be successful with all children, especially children from homes low in literacy, ethnic minority children, and children who have limited proficiency in English.

This new edition reflects two significant trends in the teaching of reading in our elementary schools—trends affecting the primary functions of the teacher of reading. First, with the focus on high-stakes testing and research-based materials, an entire new chapter on the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has been added. Learning in our schools will be accelerated through the merging of state standards with the new Common Core standards. Most school districts have embraced these new standards, and classroom teachers must use their reading materials to address the standards with their children. These new standards will add increased rigor to the curriculum as students will be required to read more difficult material in all courses, including a wider mix of literature and nonfiction. Students will need to locate information, draw inferences, make conclusions, and compare and contrast. The new Common Core State Standards will alter what children will learn, how they learn it, and how we measure learning.

Second, with the trend of increasing technological developments and their effect on the teaching-learning process, an entire new chapter on technology has

been added to help teachers understand how best to use new tools to enhance both their teaching and their children's learning (that is, leveraging technology to engage the digital generation!). All teachers are in the process of making the transition from traditional instructional design practices in their teaching to interactive student methodologies using a variety of mobile devices. The hottest instructional products for the classroom today are Web-connected multipurpose devices, such as tablets and mobile phones.

Part I, *Diversity and Reading Instruction*, begins with discussion of the growing diversity found in today's schools, poverty and its effects on schooling, and the program components of effective reading programs that beat the odds and are successful serving diverse communities. Chapter 2 presents a discussion of the importance of assessment in the learning process, highlighting a youngster's culture, self-perception, needs, emotional maturity, and performance or instructional level and specific skill needs. Appendix C contains a complete assessment tool (the Graded Paragraph Inventory) for determining a student's instructional level. Chapter 3 highlights the importance of providing differentiated instruction in the classroom. Readers are presented with the essential instructional components in the reading period and with effective teacher behaviors that guide the teaching of reading in diverse classrooms. Chapter 4 centers on the important role that parents play in the learning process. Culturally sensitive strategies are provided for teachers and practical suggestions for parents are provided so they can be an integral part of their child's reading improvement. In addition, Appendix D contains a parent guide to utilize in designing and delivering a parent education course or program centering on helping parents teach their children to read in the home.

Part II, *Critical Teaching Performance Areas: Capsule Summaries* covers the major components in the teaching of reading. Chapters 5 through 18 deal with (in sequential order) teacher expectations, oral language development, prior knowledge, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, phonics, fluency, comprehension, critical thinking, guided reading, content reading, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) based reading instruction, technology for the classroom, and independent/recreational reading. For each chapter, concise and to-the-point sections include: what it is and what research can tell us, effective teacher behaviors to implement the topic at hand, and a discussion of practical, research-based teaching strategies to implement in the classroom.

This book emanates from a unique collaborative initiative "Reading Camp Program," which is a partnership between a College of Education and a Department of Families, Parks, and Recreation in a large metropolitan city. This unique program prepares both undergraduate education majors and graduate masters in reading students, not in a public school setting, but at two inner-city community neighborhood centers. During the Fall and Spring semesters, this collaborative program takes place on Saturday mornings with undergraduate teacher education students and daily during the summer term with graduate reading masters students.

The Reading Camp Program is currently in its fourteenth year of operation. The two community centers are located in a poor, yet historic African-American neighborhood in a large city where residents are succeeding against a myriad of social and economic challenges. University students receive instruction in culturally responsive reading methods, tutor low-income children from kindergarten to grade seven, and then participate in debriefing sessions to reflect on their teaching and prepare for the next tutoring session. The undergraduate and graduate students

participating in this experience continue to try out and refine the many research-based teaching techniques explained in the text.

In addition, while the children are being tutored in reading at the community centers, a “Parent Education Program” is provided for their parents, teaching them specific teaching techniques to help their children improve in their reading abilities in the home. Appendix D contains the Parent Guide “Helping Your Child Become a Better Reader.” This guide is utilized for the parent program with specific instruction, teaching strategies, and suggestions for parents to teach their children to read in the home.

The aim of this text is to help teachers learn not only up-to-date scientifically based reading strategies but also learn to value and act upon a student’s culture, family, community, language, interest, and past experiences in the classroom. The authentic responses sprinkled throughout various points in the margins of the text are actual responses from the teacher education students teaching reading in the Reading Camp Program at the community centers, the children being tutored, and their parents. These responses are intended to give further meaning and personal insights to various aspects of teaching children in diverse communities to read.

It is the sincere wish of the author that readers utilize the information presented in this book to become increasingly cognizant of what they are doing or not doing, what needs to be improved, what needs to be modified or expanded or omitted, what factors impede teaching reading, and how students react to what the teacher is doing. Our children in our diverse communities deserve knowledgeable and thinking teachers of reading who are constantly striving to provide them with an appropriate education.

I wish to extend my thanks and appreciation to the hundreds of children tutored in the Reading Camp Program, to the numerous undergraduate and graduate university students who participated as reading teachers, to Mrs. Dana Dodd Vaughan, Reading Camp Coordinator at the Dr. J.B. Callahan Neighborhood Center and the John H. Jackson Community Center, and to the parents who made certain their children attended the Reading Camp Program and also participated in the Parent Education Program, for their invaluable participation and contributions. I am grateful to my many undergraduate and graduate students, classroom teachers, and reading coaches for their reactions to several parts of the book. I wish to thank Sarah Adams Morton of the Stanley Switlik Elementary School in Marathon, Florida, and Lourdes H. Smith of the University of Central Florida for their valuable contributions to the book.

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